

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 PA-02 H-02
SSM-05 SIG-03 PCH-02 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
SP-02 SS-15 SAA-01 SES-02 SSO-00 INRE-00 /099 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND:RGH

APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND

PA/PRS - MR. CARTER

H - MR. FLATEN

SSM - MR. MC ANDREW

NEA/IAI - MR. KORN

NEA/ARN - MR. HOWELL

NEA/EGY - MR. MARTHINSEN

NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

-----036606 082137Z /64

O 082045Z SEP 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION SINAI

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
DOD
JCS WASHDC 0000
CIA WASHDC 0000
USICA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC 0000
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS POUCH

UNCLAS STATE 228266

CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - SEPTEMBER 8

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR SEPTEMBER 8, 1978.
SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS HODDING CARTER III.

Q. HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING ON ABD AL-HALIM KHADDAM, THE
SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, SAYING THAT IF THE UNITED STATES
AND ISRAEL SIGN A DEFENSE PACT THEY ARE GOING TO TRY TO
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GET RUSSIA TO SIGN A DEFENSE PACT WITH THEM AS WELL AS
THE OTHER REJECTIONIST FRONT?

A. WE'VE SEEN THAT PRESS REPORT. I HAVE NO COMMENT ON
WHAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAS TO SAY. THAT WOULD BE A SPEC-
ULATION ON A SPECULATION SINCE I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY PLANS
TO GO ALONG THE LINE THAT THAT PRESSREPORT WAS REFERRING
TO. THEREFORE, I DON'T. BUT, IN ANY CASE, I DON'T HAVE
ANY COMMENT ON IT.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT, PLEASE -- BACKING UP -- ON
WHAT'S HAPPENING IN LEBANON -- YOU KNOW, TODAY'S
REPORT?

A. COMMENT IS NOT EXACTLY WHAT THIS IS. IT'S ONLY A

CONFIRMATION OF THE FACT THAT THERE WAS AGAIN OVERNIGHT
FIGHTING BETWEEN THE SYRIAN ELEMENTS OF THE ARAB
DETERRENT FORCE AND CHRISTIAN MILITIA IN THE SUBURBS OF
BEIRUT. BOTH SIDES USED AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND MORTARS
AND THE SYRIANS USED TANKS AND ARTILLERY AS WELL.

AS OF THE WRITING OF THIS PARTICULAR GUIDANCE, THE FIGHTING HAD DIED DOWN -- THAT IS TO SAY, EARLY THIS MORNING BEIRUT TIME.

I'VE SEEN A LATER PRESS REPORT SUGGESTING THAT IT HAS COME BACK UP AGAIN. I'M NOT ABLE TO VERIFY THAT.

ONE OTHER ITEM THAT I HAVE SEEN REPORTED AND DENIED AND REPORTED WHICH HAS TO DO WITH ISRAELI WARSHIPS OFF THE LEBANESE COAST AND ALSO MASSING OF ISRAELI TROOPS ALONG THE BORDER: WE HAVE NO INFORMATION BEYOND THOSE REPORTS. I AM UNABLE TO CONFIRM SUCH MASSING OR ACTIVITY.

Q. ACCORDING TO YOUR LATE READING, WHAT IS SYRIAN UNCLASSIFIED

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STRENGTH IN LEBANON NOW?

A. THE FIGURES THAT THE BUREAU IS STILL USING AND WHAT I BELIEVE REMAIN AS GOOD AS I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET YOU IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 30- AND 35,000, WHICH IS A BIG "SOMEWHERE." BUT IT IS NOT APPRECIABLY CHANGED BY THE ACTIVITY OF THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS IN TERMS OF THE ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTALIONS THAT CAME IN -- THAT IS TO SAY, I DON'T THINK THAT'S AN APPRECIABLE JUMP.

I'VE GONE BACK AND ASKED SOME MORE ABOUT THAT SINCE THE EARLIER CONVERSATION; AND IT'S OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE GENERAL LEVEL, TROOP LEVEL, IS VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED -- THAT IS TO SAY, OVER THIS PERIOD OF THE LAST MONTH OR SO.

Q. YOU TALKED ABOUT THE USE OF TANKS. DOES THE NUMBER REMAIN RELATIVELY THE SAME AS WELL?

A. AGAIN, I HAVE NOTHING THAT INDICATES A SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO INDICATE A BUILDUP OF SYRIAN TANK FORCES.

CHRISTOPHER

NOTE BY OC/T: POUCHED TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS.

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NNN

Message Attributes

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